Standard testing and issuance procedure for driving licenses

1889. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government has received representations from Road Safety Fora of different States to develop standard testing and issue procedures for drivers licenses all over the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that presently different State Governments have different methods and procedures for testing and issue of drivers licenses; and

(d) if so, the steps proposed/taken on the demands of these Road Safety Fora?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) and (b) The Government has received representation from Road Safety Forum, Andhra Pradesh regarding uniform system of Driving Licence in the country. They have suggested for some common guidelines for the Drivers' Test, authorising proven NGOs to test the drivers and issue drivers' licences and issuing driving licences at the national level.

(c) Chaper-II of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and Chapter-II of the Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989 prescribe a body of rules for testing and examination prior to grant of driving licences. These rules also prescribe procedure for granting the licences, validity in terms of various classes of vehicles and the time period and are applicable uniformly throughout the country. Further, Section 28 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 empowers the State Governments for appointment of the licensing authorities and determining their jurisdiction, functions etc. There is no proposal to have a national system of giving driving licences as the same is the responsibility of the State Governments in terms of Motor Vehicle Act, 1988. Central Government has also no machinery to implement the provisions of Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 by itself.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Shortage of marine crew

1890. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Shipping lines are facing acute shortage of marine crew;

(b) if so, the details with reasons thereof;

(c) whether Government proposes to hire foreign crew to meet the shortage; and

(d) the other option, Government is working out, to ease the position?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) As per the estimates of the Indian National Shipowners' Association, there is a shortfall of about 834 officers in Indian Flag vessels as of June, 2007. However, there is no shortage of ratings for manning the Indian ships.

(b) Reasons for the shortage of manpower are as follows:

(1) Overall global shortage of maritime personnel.

(2) Higher salary offered to Indian maritime personnel in foreign vessels.

(c) A proposal for hiring foreign crew to meet the shortage of officers is under consideration.

(d) The Government has initiated following measures to increase availability of manpower:

(i) Expanding the facilities for marine education and training by allowing private colleges to be opened.

(ii) Ensuring quality training at the maritime institutes as per international standards and introducing several new courses for pre and post sea training.

(iii) Action has been initiated for induction of retired navel officers into the merchant navy.

(iv) Introduction of tonnage tax obligation on shipping companies to give on board training to cadets.

(v) Permitting two years age relaxation and fee concession to encourage girl candidates to join maritime sector.

(vi) The training and examination systems have been reviewed to minimize the avoidable delays for obtaining certificate of competency.

VRS for MMD personnel

1891. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering a VRS for Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) personnel;

(b) if so, details of this proposal;

(c) whether it is a fact that MMD offices in places outside Mumbai are slow to change and are stuck to the old in-efficient system;

(d) the steps proposed to offer attractive and good VRS terms to Surveyors of the old system and with a proven track record of delays and harassment of small scale units in maritime economy;

(e) whether warnings have been issued to such elements; and

(f) the manner in which Government is helping the small entrepreneurs?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (f) The personnel of Mercantile Marine Departments (MMDs) being Central Government employees are covered under the Central Government rules regarding voluntary retirement and no separate Voluntary Retirement Scheme is required for them. Inspite of shortage of surveyors, MMDs have been making best efforts for efficient functioning.

It is not correct to say that MMD offices outside Mumbai follow old and inefficient system. The policy formulated by the Government is followed uniformly by all MMDs.